

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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LADY LOVELACE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "JUDITH WYNNE," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER IV.

"OLD Mrs. Hodges," began Mrs. Rumsey, addressing Edie, "has lately taken to coming to church. You know, as a rule, she attends the Baptist Chapel."

Mrs. Rumsey seemed afflicted with a slight though perennial huskiness. One never heard her speak without feeling tempted to clear one's own throat out of pure nervous sympathy.

The squire was dealing at that moment, Phil making the cards, the vicar enjoying a brief leisure.

"Ah, my dear," ejaculated the last-named individual blithely, "old Hodges has an eye to the future in her spiritual arrangements. Don't you know Christmas-tide (flannel-petticoat-tide, as it might be called) is approaching. Hodges prefers, naturally enough, the church to the chapel flannel, seeing we give a penny a yard more for it than the Baptists do. She found it out, sly old fox, when she was gossiping at the draper's the other——"

"Your lead, parson," interrupted the squire. Those three words might have been paraphrased somewhat as follows: "The game begins once more. In the name of common-sense have no eyes, ears, tongue, for anything but hearts, clubs, spades, diamonds!"

Ellinor rose from her chair, and walked slowly to the farther end of the drawing-room.

"Does she feel faint?" thought Edie; "is this corner too hot for her? But what a walk she has! as stately as a peacock, as graceful as a swan on the water!"

"Charlie loves a joke," said Mrs.

Rumsey mildly and huskily. She had been in the habit of saying this as a sort of cheerful Amen to her husband's attempts at facetiousness all through her married life, on an average some twenty times in the course of the twenty-four hours. Edie, having heard the remark before, knew it did not require an answer.

"Ha, ha! we did that splendidly, Colonel," laughed the squire, packing up his six tricks, and starting for the seventh. "Very neatly you managed that, upon my word!"

Soft and low at that moment there came a full minor chord from the grand piano.

Heavens and earth! There was Ellinor seated in front of it with fingers on the keys.

The knitting-pins fell from Mrs. Rumsey's fingers.

Edie rose from her sofa, made one step towards the piano, then paused in uncertainty, looking from the piano to the card-players, from the card-players to the piano.

The squire, half turning his head, gave one loud, irritable cough.

"Draw your card, partner!" he said, bending across the table towards the Colonel, in a voice that had something of a Vesuvian rumble in it.

All three gentlemen seated there felt as though the cushions of their chairs were stuffed with gun-cotton. They had known the squire not a few years. Phil alone of the three showed any presence of mind, for he packed up his cards, and laid them on the table. It was all up with the game now, he felt convinced.

The squire, turned upon him furiously. "What the——" he began; but the angry word that trembled on his lips was quenched by a long, low trill from the farther end of the drawing-room, somewhat resembling that of an early nightingale,

getting up its notes in a dim twilight it mistakes for night.

So, then, this young beauty was endowed with the voice of a prima-donna as well as the step of an Empress, and the face of an angel. Nature must have been in an uncommonly generous, not to say prodigal, frame of mind when Ellinor Yorke was laid in her cradle.

The three other gentlemen followed Phil's example, and laid down their cards. The squire leaned back in his chair, getting red and redder in the face.

"He must wait till she has finished," thought Edie; "and then—oh, then, Etna would be a smoky chimney compared with what will follow."

But as the song went on, a change came over the old gentleman's features. It was an Italian love-ditty evidently, for "caro" and "amor" seemed to occur pretty often. Not one person in that room was a proficient in the liquid, love-making language, but not one person there but would have sworn they knew all that the singer was saying of vehement love and passionate tenderness. It was not a song that would make men go back in memory to their boyish days, and the tender-hearted mother they so quickly "grew out of" kissing, and who, only too soon, was laid where neither loving hands nor loving lips could reach her; it was not a song that would bring to women's eyes an aching, a scorching pain, and a vision of a baby face and form lying, like some broken waxen lily, in a white befrilled nest they dared not think of as a coffin. No, it was rather a song that would startle, amaze, set one wondering first, trembling afterwards with a whole unknown world of feelings aroused within. As it came to an end, and died away in a series of low, half-suppressed passionate iterations, Edie said to herself, giving one long, curious look at Ellinor:

"I know now why Phil called her 'Lady Lovelace,' and I think I know, too, what manner of man Lovelace was."

As Ellinor played her final chord, Colonel Wickham put his hand to his forehead, as though some sudden sensation of pain had struck him there. The vicar leaned forward a little uneasily.

"I don't think I ever heard anything quite like that before," he said, for the first time in his life without a joke at command, an experience that was altogether new and strange to him.

As for Phil, he simply fixed his eyes on the girl, and never lifted them till the song

came to an end. He looked, and looked, and looked, as though looking were the whole business of his life, and required the absorption of every other sense and faculty. If a thunderbolt had struck him there and then as he sat, he would have passed away into eternity with his eyes full of Ellinor Yorke; nothing, no one else.

The squire, still leaning back in his chair, with an odd, tamed, "brought-to-reason" sort of expression on his face, noted Phil's look, and said to himself:

"Oh, that's it, is it? I see I shall have to get between you and danger, Master Phil."

The Colonel noted it also, and said to himself, still with his hands across his forehead:

"Ah, Phil, you and I must have a talk together as we walk home through the park."

And Edie noted it, and said to herself as she put a tremendously long stitch in her white lilies:

"What a good thing it is I have given Phil back his liberty! It would have been quite too dreadful if he had found out after we were married that—that—"

But here there seemed to come a mist before her eyes, and her thoughts grew incoherent.

Ellinor rose slowly and gracefully from the piano, and surveyed her audience. Her eyes rested first on the squire benignantly; secondly on the Colonel approvingly; thirdly on Phil with a look so comprehensive, so full of meaning, it would take a sentence to express it, a page to analyse it.

It might have been with such a look as this on her face that the fair Elaine answered Gawain "full simply": "If I love not him, methinks there is none other I can love."

It possibly was with such a look as this on his face that the old Kaiser Wilhelm surveyed the plan of the fortifications of Paris, and said to Bismarck: "How now, Count? How long think you this city of soldiers will hold out? Here is metal worth our hammer."

Edie, Mrs. Rumsey, and the vicar, she simply overlooked and ignored.

Ellinor's movement seemed to restore common-sense to the party. Edie murmured a word of thanks. The squire crossed the room and began an elaborate acknowledgment.

"Although so unexpected—ah yes, of

course, on whist-nights one could not expect such a pleasure—we have none the less enjoyed your song, my dear. And now that the game is broken up—yes, of course, we're all in a fog all round as to how we leave off even—I do think you might sing us something else—eh, Ellinor?" he said in his usual loud, mellow tones.

Ellinor smiled graciously at him.

"Another time I will sing to you, not now; I am rather tired, and will say good-night," she answered with a little bow that might be taken to be a good-night to the company generally.

The squire opened the door for her; the squire rang the bell for her candle, and to make sure that her two maids were in attendance; the squire conducted her to the foot of the stairs for fear she might lose her way crossing a hall twenty-four feet by twelve. Then he went back to the library, where the other gentlemen by this time had become engrossed in various topics of local interest—the next meet of the staghounds, the resignation of an M. F. H. of long standing.

He shut the door very carefully behind him.

"I think, gentlemen," he said in very magisterial tones, "if it is all the same to all of you, it would be as well for us to meet for whist at Colonel Wickham's house through the winter, if he has no objection."

Phil went over to Edie's side and tried to make her lift her eyes from her white lilies. If they had been magnetic, and her eyes metallic, they could not have been more attracted one to the other.

"I say, Edie," he whispered, "I heard a piece of news this afternoon just before I came out. Old Lord Winterdowne died last night in Florence; the new lord (his nephew, you know) will be down here in a few days taking stock of the place. It seems the old man was given over about ten days ago—just precisely at the time your cousin wrote to you. Now do you see any reason for Lady Lovelace's visit?"

And meantime Lady Lovelace herself, seated in front of her dressing-room fire, was submitting to the tedious process of hair-brushing which a yard and a quarter of thick auburn hair necessitates. Gretchen was performing the duty with the slowness, precision, and thoroughness of a German maid. Only once she paused in her task, and that was to give utterance to a Teutonic "So, madame," in reply to a remark from her mistress.

Ellinor, after sitting silent for about ten minutes, had suddenly looked up, and said:

"I think on the whole, Gretchen, I am disposed to like my winter quarters. I can see I shall find plenty to amuse me here."

CHAPTER V.

EDIE came down the next morning full of condolences for her father on his interrupted rubber.

"If I had only known what she intended doing, papa, I would have locked the piano and taken away the key," she said in her softest and most sympathetic tones; "or Mrs. Rumsey and I would have taken our work into the morning-room. She could not have sat in with you all by herself; her effrontery must have stopped short of that."

"Ah, never mind, my dear," answered the squire cheerily. "It's all over now, and for the future we will run no risk of interruptions. We shall all meet at Colonel Wickham's through the winter, and, as he is a bachelor, of course no ladies need be invited. Not even you, little Edie, to make eyes at your Phil. And, after all, the song was uncommonly well sung, and uncommonly well Ellinor looked at the piano, too!"

"Why, papa, I should have thought you would rather have seen her at the treadmill than at the piano on a whist-night!"

"At the treadmill! Lord forbid, my dear! A fine young woman like that!"

"Well," said Edie philosophically, after a pause, in which she seemed feeling about for a logical solution to this mystery, "I suppose it is because she is 'a fine young woman' that you take the thing so calmly. I remember when John came in and said that Farmer Twentyman had shot a fox, you jumped up and called him a 'Jackass.' Yes, you did, papa—that was the very word you used."

"My dear, to convey such news as that to a man in the middle of a rubber was the very essence of Jackassness, and if you compare the killing of a fox with a young lady singing a song, you will, perhaps, see what I mean. Why, Edie, if it were only my grandmother shot I shouldn't like to have the news brought to me till I had finished the rub."

Edie made no reply for at least three minutes. Then she said very slowly, very meditatively:

"I think, papa, for the future, whenever you are quietly settling down in the library, and particularly do not wish to be disturbed, I'll go to the piano and begin singing——"

"No, no, no, Edie," interrupted the squire hurriedly, flurriedly—for he knew the young lady was quite equal to carrying out her threat. "You mustn't do anything of the sort, or I shall——"

"And I'll open the top as high as it will go, and I'll have the loud pedal down, and I'll get the names of all Ellinor's songs and sing them, one after the other," Edie went on calmly.

"No, no, no, Edie," again iterated the squire. "Her songs wouldn't suit your voice, you may depend; and, my dear, it's the sort of thing—take my word for it—you mustn't attempt. Why, child, you wouldn't like me to have to throw up a thick wall between the drawing-room and library, would you?"

"The sort of thing I must not attempt," repeated Edie slowly, "and which Ellinor may, as often as she pleases! Papa, do you mind telling me why Ellinor may do things I must not attempt?"

"Ah, she's a different person altogether—altogether, don't you see, my dear?" answered the squire somewhat uneasily, for Edie was going a little too deeply into the reason of the thing to please him. "Don't you see, you may do things she cannot, and—vice versa."

"I think," Edie went on, half soliloquising, half addressing her father—"I think it must be the combined efforts of the two maids which make her such an altogether superior person. Papa, I think I must establish a new routine in the house, from top to bottom, and, in the first place, go in for two new experienced maids."

"My dear!"

"One shall be French, one shall be German. You see, I have had my old Janet ever since I was six years old, and she has no idea of anything unless I first put it into her head. Now, the new maids I will have shall put things into my head, and tell me where to have my dresses made, and how to pencil my eyebrows, and 'make up' my complexion."

"Edie!" was all the squire found breath to ejaculate.

"Yes; and there's another thing—they shall tell me where to send to have the stuff of my dresses made for me any colour I please, whether it's Lyons, or Coventry, or anywhere else. And one of them shall

do nothing else but attend to my dresses, and the other shall think of nothing but hairdressing from morning till night. I'll send her away immediately if she dares to have a thought in her head for anything else, even her bread-and-butter."

"Edie, Edie, you'll drive me mad if you rattle on in this way!"

"Well, papa, Gretchen does not dare have a thought for anything but hairdressing, so why should not my new maid be equally restricted? Gretchen told Janet, only this morning, that her one business in life is to provide her mistress with new styles in hairdressing. Ellinor never wears her hair, it seems, the same way two nights running. Gretchen has a model, a plaster cast of a head, and whole boxes of false hair, and every spare moment she is plaiting, and curling, and twisting, and trying it on the model."

"Now, pussy, this is all wretched gossip from beginning to end. I wonder you condescend to lend an ear to it."

"Oh, papa, I am obliged to lend an ear to everything Janet chooses to tell me, as you know, or might know, if she undertook to brush your hair for half an hour night and morning. Ah, I forgot," this with a comical upward look at her father's sparse locks; "five minutes might very well do for your hairdressing."

"Now, Edie, you are growing personal. It's time we broke off. Will you ride this morning? I am going over to Brentmere about that cob I was telling you of the other day. I wonder if Ellinor would like a canter. You might run up and ask her, child."

Miss Yorke had not as yet made her appearance, although it was close upon eleven o'clock.

"Thank you, no. I'll send up a message, if it's all the same to you, papa. I've paid my first and last visit to Ellinor's dressing-room," said Edie, ringing the bell as she spoke.

An answer to her message came back quickly enough. Miss Yorke begged to be excused. She had letters to write, and could not come down till luncheon. Also, she would like to see the horses before she put on her habit.

"There, papa, did you ever have such a message as that sent down to you before from a visitor?" exclaimed Edie when the servant had departed. "Like to see the horses, indeed! As though we were livery-stable people, with a few miserable hacks waiting her high mightiness's commands!

I wonder if she would condescend to mount my mare! I think, papa, instead of riding over to Brentmere about a cob, you had better go up to Tattersall's, and see if they have any thoroughbreds on sale just now! Like to see the horses, indeed!"

"Now, now, Edie, you are going at express speed again, and, as usual, stopping at nothing. Don't you see, Ellinor's message may be taken in quite another light? It may be, she has not been riding much lately, and is consequently out of practice; or possibly she is naturally a timid rider, and is afraid we have nothing but hunters in the stable. Don't you see, my dear?"

"Yes, I see," said Edie with a little curl of her upper lip. "It's exactly the sort of message a timid person would send down, is it not?"

PLANT-LIFE—MORAL, SOCIAL, POLITICAL.

DOES the sundew enjoy the fly out of whom it squeezes the life-juices, after having enticed him with that drop of bright liquid which gives it its name? Does it discriminate between flavours, preferring thrip to ant, and moth to either? And when the scientist, for his own selfish ends, has fed it day by day with little shreds of raw beef, does it get to feel like a man-eating tiger, careless of any other kind of food? It is a clever creature, that sundew. Do not you know it? Well, the next time you go to Wales, or Dartmoor, or Bournemouth, or to any place where there is poor, boggy land, look carefully at one of the pale-green patches that look as if delicately-tinted "art flannel," steeped in soapy water, had been drawn over them. You cannot imagine any more unlikely soil for anything to grow in, and yet that is the home of the sundew, and it is the exceeding poverty of the ground which has made it into the devouring cannibal that it is. Plants want nitrogen, and they want potash, and there is little of either to be got out of a bit of green, slimy bog. But animal matter is rich in nitrogen and potash salts; therefore the sundew has become carnivorous. Its disposition must have been bad to begin with. Other plants are condemned to the same habitat, as the botanists call it. The water-buttercup, for instance, has lost its footing in the fat meadows, and has for ages lived in the thin, innutritious element, but, instead of taking to animal food, it

has solved the difficulty by dividing its leaves into a vast number of hair-like threads. This is a common device of such water-plants as have not (like the water-lilies) a good hold on the rich mud below. The threads go hither and thither in search of food, and, being many, manage to scrape together enough for the needs of the plant. For the same reason, ferns, and hedge-parsley, and such like, growing under trees where there is little sun, and, therefore, only a scanty supply of plant-food, or else on banks where the hedge-roots take all the nourishment out of the ground, have their leaves minutely divided, in order that each little leaflet or frondlet may bring in something to the common stock. The sundew has preferred baser courses. It has taken to insect-eating, turning the tables on the hereditary foes of the vegetable kingdom, and those tufts of brown, pink-fringed leaves, with a little spike of small white flowers rising out of each, which are crowded on the pale-green, unwholesome-looking patches of bog, are so many traps, the fringes having developed such a discriminating sensitiveness as to close in at once on nutritive food, but to care no more, if a bit of wood or a grain of sand is placed on the leaf, than they do for the pattering of the rain-drops. Thus they are much sharper than the sensitive-plant, which acts just the same whether you touch it with your finger or tickle it with a straw; but, just as clever people often overreach themselves, so the sundew has one weakness. It is a glutton, and does not know when it has had enough. An American lady naturalist, Mrs. Mary Treat, of New Jersey, found it easy to cause the reckless feeder a fit of indigestion. Nay, she was able to give leaf after leaf a fatal surfeit. "Several leaves (she says) caught three flies successively, but few were able to digest the third. Five leaves, however, digested each three flies, and closed upon the fourth, but died in the attempt to digest it." These sundews are found pretty nearly all the world over—in China, Madagascar, the Cape—and Kingsley tells how delightful it was to come upon one in a West Indian swamp. Those to whom something has been revealed about that deepest of all mysteries, the great ice age, tell us that the sundew really belongs to the southern hemisphere—no fewer than forty-one species of it have been found in Australia alone, and the Cape kinds have splendid purple flowers, which put our little chickweedy blossom quite to shame. It got across the line during one

of those swingings of the earth's axis which have brought the ice at one time down from the North Pole, and at another up from the South Pole to near the equator; and it has gradually moved northward, we are told, picking out the spots where nothing else will grow, preferring to hold to its unplant-like appetite rather than accommodate itself to a richer soil, in which it could have no excuse for such practices.

I doubt if you will be able to transplant a sundew and make it live in your garden or greenhouse. Nothing is harder than to acclimatise weeds in general. Geraniums, which grow from the stem-joints, and, by their immense vitality ousting our old-fashioned garden-plants, avenge on us the killing out of their compatriots, are likely to deceive us in this respect. But most plants will not grow if the tip of the main root is injured. You do not know what a delicate organ it is, made like the tentacles of a zoophyte for feeling about in search of food, and provided with a case to keep it from getting hurt as it moves through earth and stones. Look at the weed you have pulled up; why, you have actually skinned this root-tip, torn off the protecting-sheath; and then you expect the poor plant to take root and live. Why, you might almost as well expect an Ostend rabbit to live if you took it off a salesman's stall and put it into a warren.

However, try the sundew; it is not the root that will be your difficulty so much as the atmosphere in which the fly-catcher lives. Stagnant water, rotting moss, and hot sun—it takes some trouble to imitate that combination, either in the open air or under glass, in a London suburb. Yet the place where I used to find the sundew has almost become a London suburb. I was pretty sure of it in out-of-the-way nooks on Wimbledon Common; but if that failed, Walton Hurst never deceived me. They were making a cutting for the South Western, and I was divided between my delight in plant-hunting and my boyish joy in watching the navvies and their works. In those days there was cotton-grass to be found, by those who knew where to look, on Hampstead Heath; indeed, the neighbourhood of town had more rare plants than you would find in half-a-dozen commonplace Midland counties.

But if you cannot get a sundew or a butterwort—which, with its rosette of greasy, yellow-green leaves, is also said to be carnivorous—nor a bladderwort—the bladders of which are found to be not

really floats but traps, on the plan of an eel-trap, easy for water-beetles to get into, hard to escape from—you can study plant-cannibalism in any hot-house where there is a pitcher-plant.

This strange creature is found all over the Southern Archipelago. On the mountains of Borneo are plants with pitchers that will hold two quarts of water; and the thirsty traveller, fresh from his Bridgewater Treatises, and full of the idea that everything in the world is arranged for man, especially for English man, thought these pitchers due to a beneficent care for his comfort. He even called the plant "Nepenthe" (pain-assuager) out of gratitude for its bountiful water-supply. Unfortunately, the pitchers have a cover, arranged to prevent their getting anything like full; and they usually contain a mass of putrid animal matter—flies, ants, and other soft, easily-digested creatures whom the latest research "proves" (so far as such a thing can be "proved") to be victims, not of accident, but of design. The sundew and the Venus's fly-trap of Carolina are cleaner feeders; they garotte their prey and suck its juices, flinging off the carcase when no more can be got out of it. The pitcher-plants keep theirs in a sort of liquid manure-heap, the juices on the inner wall of the pitcher always making the water it contains slightly acid, and giving it the properties of pepsine, so that in three days it will turn cartilage into jelly; and they want it, for they sometimes catch small birds.

The American pitcher-plant (*Sarracenia*) has a less elaborate contrivance than that of Borneo. Instead of a regular pitcher at the end of the leaf, the edges of two of its leaves grow together, forming a water-tight tube sometimes three feet high; and Professor Asa Grey draws an edifying parallel between the way in which flies are decoyed farther and farther in till there is no escape, and the enticements which lead young men on and on along the downward road.

Well, no doubt several plants are carnivorous because "'tis their nature to," but this fact does not help us to answer the question, "Do they enjoy their meal?" Is a pitcher-plant more delighted when it gets hold of a good fat fly than a rose is when, in dry weather, you give it a good watering? It all depends on what you mean by consciousness. And here, as in other cases, we have to enlarge our definitions. The cut-and-dried answers

of the old primers, which gravely settled all the great problems of existence in a dozen questions and answers which a child could learn in an hour, would not satisfy us, who, at any rate, have come to feel our own ignorance, and to feel something of the mystery of existence. Instinct, for instance, we used to be told, is something wholly different from reason; but now instinct is held to be the result of the experience of the race, just as reason in you or me comes of our personal experience. But the race is made up of individuals, and, therefore, reason is always tending to become instinctive; and there is, as one sees in dogs, a gradual shading off from the one to the other. In insects this instinct is said to grow, as it certainly does in birds. Mr. Bates found that the bees on the Amazons have not yet discovered that hexagon cells give the largest amount of accommodation in the least space and with the least expenditure of material.

Are plants, too, gaining experience and transmitting it? And have they any notion they are doing so? Oh, but plants have no specialised nerves along which sensations can travel, and where they can be registered. In fact, they have neither ganglia nor brains, but a great many of the undoubtedly animal group of *Cœlentera* share in the deficiency. The amoeba is undoubtedly an animal, yet Herbert Spencer calls it "a speck of jelly having no constant form." Structure seems no sure test, and as for intelligence, I will back that of the onion, which manages somehow to extract sulphur from the very same soil and air from which the carrot in the next row extracts sugar and potash, against the reason of the human animal, who out of good, hard-earned money gets little but doctored beer, and yet more doctored gin; and the stupidity of the horse, which has never, through all the ages, learnt that yew-leaves are unwholesome.

Plants have their likes and dislikes; they are given to stealing, to make-believe, to driving the weakest to the wall, to decking themselves out as fine as Jezebels for their own purposes. Plants grow, like animals, by multiplication of their cells, and their cells are made of the same protoplasm—jelly-like substance, composed chiefly of carbon, oxygen, hydrogen, and nitrogen—of which animal cells are formed. The protoplasm is to the plant what the brickmaker's prepared clay is to the house. As for the want of a heart, plants get over that by capillary attraction, while

their leaves are lungs, only that, instead of giving out carbonic acid gas, they give out oxygen. This solves the bedroom difficulty, which used to give trouble in the less ventilating days of our forefathers. Green leaves do no harm, but good; flowers, on the other hand, breathe as we do, sucking in the oxygen and giving out carbonic acid. The leaf is the real individual; flowers are leaves "aborted" for the purposes of reproduction. As for growth by buds, that goes on among insects as well. The biological books give us, side by side, three "colonies of organisms"—a plant with bud at every joint; a sea-fir, with hydra-polypes at the joints answering to the buds in the plants; a chain of tree-lice (aphides), holding closely together, and multiplying by a process of budding. The winged aphides, which appear, like flying ants, once a year, answer to the seed-producing flowers, and are only produced when there is a need for founding a distant colony.

There is no reason, then, in the leaf and bud arrangement, for classing vegetables in a kingdom apart, if we will look on a plant as a body corporate. Some of its members are for defence, its soldiers; others for trade and accumulating wealth, the roots and leaves; others answer to the ornamental spending classes, the flowers; others, the seeds, emigrate. How much is the cost of a flower is seen in the case of lilies; the bulbs are storing up for the flowers, and a gardener who wants to have an extra fine lily-spike, nips off the buds for a year or two, that the store may be larger. All this expense is for a purpose, to attract insects, and so to ensure cross fertilisation. So with one voice say the scientists, and yet the case of the lily seems to tell the other way, for lilies seldom seed, reproducing themselves mostly by bulblets, and hence the flowers, on which so much stored up nutriment is lavished, seem, from the reproductive point of view, pure waste. What a storing up there must be for the aloe, to nourish that huge spike, half as high as a house, which, naturally enough, so exhausts the plant that it can only be produced once in a lifetime. This storing up, by the way, is the reason why our early-blooming plants, crocuses and the like, are mostly bulbs; they are ready to blossom, while other plants in general are not till the sun has enabled them to take in a store of starch. Our autumn flowering bulbs are either, like the Guernsey lily, foreigners, which still keep their antarctic habits, or like the meadow-saffron, natives of such poor, dry soil, that all

their energy is needed to keep life going.

Of course, in the main, however it may be with bulbs, flowers are produced for reproductive purposes. In-breeding is bad for plants as well as animals; and the plants that have got crossed have, by natural selection, outlasted the self-fertilising ones. Hence plant instinct has led most of them to aim at crossing; and hence the bright colouring of flowers, to attract bees and butterflies. Yellow they say (I cannot tell on what grounds) was the earliest colour, appearing as soon as there were any insects to enjoy it. Blue is supposed to be the last developed (there is hope of a blue rose yet); bees love it, and bees are the best of cross-fertilisers. Dr. Müller, however, tells us that the change of colour, from red to blue, which comes over the blossoms of bugloss and several other of our wild flowers, is a sign to the bees that they need not trouble to come, the blue flowers being found destitute of honey, and having, therefore, been already visited and presumably fertilised. How is the cross-fertilisation managed? You know the yellow dust, pollen, so abundant in wheat that it weighs fifty pounds to the acre? Farmers always like a good wind when the wheat is blooming, for wheat is one of the wind-fertilised flowers that are independent of insect-visits. Look under a sweet chestnut-tree at flowering-time and you will see the ground thickly coated with yellow dust; and under the Jamaica Cabbage Palm it looks as if there had been a heavy fall of snow; while in Canada the lakes get crusted and the hollows of the ground quite filled with pollen from the pine-trees. Well, this pollen sticks about the hairy bodies of bees that have been attracted by the bright colour and then drawn in by the honey. Then when a fresh flower is visited, some of this pollen gets rubbed off on the sticky surface of the "style" or prolongation of the seed-vessels; and thus the seed of one flower is fertilised by the pollen from another.

The devices by which, while hairy bees are encouraged, smooth, useless flies are kept out or even caught and killed are very curious. Look at the asclepiads in your greenhouse, and you will see most of the flowers grasping dead flies, not killed for food, like the sundew's victims, but because they would eat the honey without carrying round the pollen. This is the reason why the tubes of so many flowers are beset with small hairs, strong

enough to keep out a fly, but giving way to the attack of a bee. A case in point is the bog-bean, whose lovely pink petals have their surfaces turned into veritable *chevaux de frise* to keep off "unbidden guests." Then there are devices to baffle ants; and a kind of acacia, the Bullhorn thorn, is said in Belt's *Naturalist in Nicaragua* to adopt the plan of maintaining a colony of peculiarly savage ants who are allowed black-mail on condition of keeping at bay their leaf-cutting cousins.

Fertilisation, then, is the reason of the existence of coloured flowers; it also accounts for the tendency of flowers to grow in masses, especially where insects are few. On the edges of the glaciers there are only a few butterflies, and they need directing, being purblind as compared with bees. Hence the fields of blue and rose blossoms which form one great charm of the Alpine landscape if you go earlier than the ruck of tourists. The seed being fertilised, the next thing is to get it dispersed. Hence it must in some way commend itself to the birds, which are to seeds in much the same relation that insects are to flowers. Hence fruits are made attractive, when ripe, either to eye or taste, or to both; while, on the other hand, when unripe, and therefore not ready for dispersion, they are full of citric or malic acid, which is liked neither by bird nor beast. There is a large class of showy fruits, poisonous to mammals, but harmless to birds, as if the plants preferred a wider dispersion than that which a slow ruminant would give it. Hazel-nuts, and such like, which are too large to be carried about by birds, are, on the contrary, carefully protected. While unripe, they are wrapped in casings just the colour of the leaves; when ripe, they take the hue of the ground on which they fall. And some are said to kill even birds. Thus, Mr. Grant Allen, who is full of pleasant Darwinistic fancies, says that the red berries of our little arum (lords and ladies) have grown so brilliant that they may entice to their doom the birds, whose carcasses will form a manure-heap to nourish the plant. This, Dr. J. E. Taylor, whose *Sagacity and Morality of Plants* is a very storehouse of curious facts and suggestions, denies. The birds (he says) would long ago have got inured to the poison, as Carinthian peasants do to eating arsenic, or else would have learned to eschew the fruit. I suppose the thing can be proved one way or the other simply by

"observing" a sufficient number of arum-tufts.

The selfishness of trees has been the theme of everyone who has seen a tropical forest. Our ivy is good and kind compared with the lianas and Bauhinias of the South American forests, whose huge lattice-work remains after the tree about which it was formed has wholly rotted out through the interstices. An equatorial forest, with its bush-ropes, and parasites, and epiphytes, shows a struggle for existence that an armchair botanist can hardly realise. "We have," says Dr. Taylor, "no vegetable Thugs like the Sipo Matador of the Brazilian forests;" but we have our blood-suckers. Look how the dodder, with its tangle of red threads, plays the cuttle-fish with a poor gorse-bush; and see how that impudent knave the broom-rape fastens on the roots of the clover. In a grove of Scotch firs we see a good instance of successful tyranny. Why is there no undergrowth, no carpet even, of moss or lichen on the dead fir-needles below? Just because those needles, so full of silica, prevent even mosses from getting a foothold. A few plants have got used to living under trees—the rhododendrons, for instance, have been trained to live under thick foliage, such as clothes the sides of the Himalayas. The butcher's broom, sole representative in England of the palms and other woody monocotyledons so common here in earlier geological ages, has lost its leaves in the struggle to live under trees. This strange shrub, kin to the lilies (my Handbook places it between the asparagus and the lily of the valley)—lily-like in that it has only one lobe to its seed—breathes through the flattened ends of its stems, which, like the leaves of ordinary plants, are covered with carbon-feeding mouths. "With leaves," says Dr. Taylor, "it could not make both ends meet; and so the branches took on themselves the work of supply. . . . What a story of quiet suffering and struggling does this fact tell us!"

But, while every tree—and not the equatorial liana only—is ready to strangle its neighbour, while even the humblest weed is on the watch to starve out its fellow-weed by appropriating every scrap of nourishment within reach, there is (if we please so to interpret it) a vast amount of self-sacrifice in plants of the same family. You know that the outer florets of the daisy and of all such flowers, or rather, colonies of flowers, are barren. So it is again with the wild guelder rose. In the

garden variety all the florets have become barren, as is the rule with "double" flowers, each head forming what we call a "snow-ball;" but in the hedgerows the inner florets are still seed-producing, and comparatively inconspicuous. The outer ones have denied themselves, and used their whole energy in developing those large dead-white petals, which are so conspicuous even in the dark that they must be wonderfully attractive to the very numerous tribes of night-feeding moths. Co-operation among such plants is as much a fact as storing up or thrift is among the bulbs. Plants, too, have their poor relatives; the little "Lady's Mantle" belongs to the same family as the rose.

In a word, if we like to look at things from the modern scientist's point of view, plants are our fellow-creatures; most of them engaged in doing what they take to be the best for themselves, some few giving up their own enjoyments for the good of the common weal. Everything depends on your point of view. These are the facts, explain them as you will. The sundew does catch flies; is it as much a conscious agent as a spider? The sipo does kill out any tree it can get hold of; is it (as its name implies) a remorseless butcher? In Mrs. Gatty's Parables from Nature the trees are made to talk. Grant Allen's trees, and Darwin's, and Wallace's, and Dr. Taylor's, do not go quite so far as that, but they act, and very decidedly too. Are we to believe that they mean what they do, and have reasons of their own for so acting apart from any law impressed on them from outside? Some scientists delight in talking of insects as automata, as a first step towards proclaiming that human beings also have no control over their actions, no free will, but are forced to move along certain grooves. To talk of plants as exercising will and choice (though the will always moves in a certain direction) is just the opposite way of looking at things. Which is the right way? We had better boldly say, we do not yet know. Anyway, the facts are there, and the study of them has changed botany from the driest and dullest into the most interesting and suggestive of the natural sciences.

A CHAPTER OF BLUNDERS.

PASS, Certificate, and Competitive Examinations are, no doubt, all sufficiently serious affairs to examinees, and

sufficiently trying ones to examiners. To the outer public, however, to those "who have no son or brother there," such "exams." are, as a rule, nothing if not a source of amusement. The "results" aimed at in examinations are, for the most part, admirable; but in the course of the processes, in the answering of examination questions, the unexpected constantly happens, and it is the unlooked-for results, the "surprises" of the occasions, that make sport for the Philistines. The situation on this head is easily explicable. It is a natural result of the modern system of preparation for examination—the cram system. Examinees bent only on "getting through" will answer questions on the hit-or-miss principle, while others, whose brains have become more or less addled under the pressure of "memory work," will evolve from their unbalanced inner consciousness replies fearfully and wonderfully made.

Some of the "exam." stories current in educational circles, though characteristic, and possibly "founded on fact," have an air of belonging to the too-good-to-be-true category. A number of these are told against—and, if invented, were probably invented by—undergraduates. Thus—so the story goes—an undergraduate was asked to name the minor prophets, and, not having "got them up," neatly and politely replied that he would rather not make invidious distinctions. Another University man, called upon to give the parable of the Good Samaritan, did so correctly enough until he came to the passage where the Samaritan said to the innkeeper: "When I come again I will repay thee," to which he added, "This he said, knowing that he would see his face no more." Perhaps, however, the examinee upon this occasion was a conscious humourist, and had in mind the worldly-wise saying, that there are a great many people willing to play the part of the Good Samaritan, less the oil and the twopence.

Something of the same stamp must have been the candidate for a degree, who, asked to state the substance of St. Paul's sermon at Athens, said that it was "crying out for two hours, 'Great is Diana of the Ephesians.'" With variations, that is the substance of a great many sermons, and of other discourses beside sermons.

Such stories as the above may or may not be rather broadly illustrative than strictly true, but in any case they can be pretty well matched by others, about the

truthfulness of which there is no doubt. Every year a certain proportion of the children of the London board-schools enter into a competitive examination in Scriptural knowledge, for the "Peek Prizes," which consist of handsomely got-up Bibles and Testaments. They are "paper work" examinations, and the following are a few of the many curious "hash" answers that have at various times been put in at them.

"Abraham was the father of Lot, and ad tew wives. One was called Hishmale and tother Haggar, he kept wun at home, and he turned tother into the desert where she became a pillow of salt in the day time, and a pillow of fire by night."

"Joseph wore a coat of many garments. He were chief butler to Faro and told is dreams. He married Potiffers dortor, and he led the Gypshans out of bondage to Kana in Gallilee, and there fell on his sword and died in sight of the promised land."

"Moses was an Egepshion. He lived in a hark made of bulrushes, and he kept a golden calf and worshipt brazen snakes, and he het nothing but kwales and manner for forty year. He was kort by the air of his ed while riding under the bow of a tree and he was killed by his son Absolon as he was hangin from the bow. His end was pease."

Of the numerous stories told in connection with diocesan inspection "exams." in public elementary schools, the two following are perhaps the best known and most worth quoting. At one of these exams, a boy, asked to mention the occasion upon which it is recorded in Scripture than an animal spoke, made answer: "The whale when it swallowed Jonah." The Inspector being something of a humourist, maintained his gravity and asked: "What did the whale say?" To which the boy promptly replied: "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." Another Inspector, finding a class hesitating over answering the question, "With what weapon did Samson slay the Philistines?" and wishing to prompt them, significantly tapped his own cheek, and asked, "What is this?" and his action touching "the chords of memory," the whole class instantly answered: "The jawbone of an ass."

A good example of the manner in which students who are "in" for several "subjects" at the same time get their ideas mixed, is that of the youth who having to answer the question, "Who was Esau?" replied: "Esau was a man who wrote

fables, and sold the copyright for a bottle of potash." Here the confusion thrice confounded of Esau and Æsop, birthright and copyright, and pottage and potash, is really admirable in its way.

As might be expected, the examinations of medical students afford some good stories—true or otherwise. As might also be expected, some of them are wittily impudent. For instance, a "badgering" examiner asked a student what means he would employ to induce copious perspiration in a patient, and got for answer: "I'd make him try to pass an examination before you, sir." The most frequently cited anecdote of this kind is that of the brusque examiner—said by some to have been Dr. Abernethy—who, losing patience with a student who had answered badly, exclaimed: "Perhaps, sir, you could tell me the names of the muscles I would put in action if I were to kick you?" "Undoubtedly, sir," came the prompt reply; "you would put into motion the flexors and extensors of my arm, for I should knock you down." On the same lines as this was the retort made to M. Lefebvre de Fourcy, a French examiner, celebrated, not only for his learning, but also for his severity and rudeness. He was examining a youth, who, though well up in his work, hesitated over answering one of the questions put to him. Losing temper at this, the examiner shouted to an attendant: "Bring a truss of hay for this young gentleman's breakfast." "Bring two," coolly added the examinee. "Monsieur and I will breakfast together." Of such alleged answers by students as that the pancreas was so named after the Midland railway-station, that the bone of the upper arm (humerus) was called the humorous, and was so styled because it was known as the funny-bone; or that the ankle-bone (tarsus) was so called because St. Paul walked upon it to the city of that name—of such alleged answers as these it is charitable to suppose that they must be weak inventions of the enemy.

Many of the comicalities in the way of examination answers recorded by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools, the Examiners in the School Board Scholarships competitions, and other the like official personages, go a long way to prove that in examination blundering, as in many other matters, truth is sometimes stranger than fiction. At least, it seems to us that no invented story—supposing examination stories ever are invented—could equal for

"nice derangement" the following written answer which was actually given at an examination in the "specific subjects" in a public elementary school within the metropolitan area. The specific subject taken was physiology, and the children "presented" in it were asked to "describe the processes of digestion," which one of them did in this wise: "Food is digested by the action of the lungs. Digestion is brought on by the lungs having something the matter with them. The food then passes through your windpipe to the pores, and thus passes off your body by evaporation, through a lot of little holes in your skin called capillaries. The food is nourished in the stomach. If you were to eat anything hard you would not be able to digest it, and the consequence would be you would have indigestion. The gall-bladder throws off juice from the food which passes through it. We call the kidneys the bread-basket, because it is where all the bread goes to. They lay up concealed by the heart."

Domestic economy, as nowadays taught to "children of the elementary school class," embraces a good deal of physiological knowledge, or rather, as applied to such children, physiological jargon. It is a subject which affords hosts of amusing answers, though, from considerations of space, two or three must here suffice for specimens. Thus, in reply to the question, "Why do we cook our food?" one fifth-standard girl gives the delightfully inconsequent reply: "Their of five ways of cooking potatoes. We should die if we eat our food roar." Another girl writes: "The function of food is to do its proper work in the body. Its proper work is to well masticate the food, and it goes through without dropping, instead of being pushed down by the skin." A third domestic economy pupil puts in her examination-paper that "Food digested is when we put it into our mouths, our teeth chews it, and our tongue roll it down into our body. . . . We should not eat so much bone-making foods as flesh-forming and warmth-giving foods, for if we did we would have too many bones, and that would make us look funny." On the subject of ventilation, one student informs us that a room should be kept at ninety in the winter by a fire; in the summer by a thermometer; while a classmate writes: "A Thermometer is an instrument used to let out the heat when it is going to be cold." Another girl sets down: "When

roasting a piece of beef place it in front of a brisk fire, so as to congratulate the outside." But an answer—still in domestic economy—that better, perhaps, than any of the above illustrates the jargoning that comes of the cram system, is the following: "Sugar is an amyloid, if you was to eat much sugar and not nothing else you would not live because sugar has not got no carbon, hydrogen, oxygen, nitrogen. Potatoes is another amyloids."

The definitions sometimes given by children in reply to examination questioning, are, to say the least of it, original. After a reading of Gray's *Elegy* by a fourth-standard class, the boys were asked what was meant by "fretted vaults," and one youth replied: "The vaults in which those poor people were buried; their friends came and fretted over them." Asked what he understood by "elegy," another boy, in the same class, answered: "Elegy is some poetry wrote out for schools to learn, like Gray's *Elegy*." A class of girls, who had read a passage from *Evangeline*, were told to write out the meaning of "the forge," and these were among the answers: "A firnest in a blacksmith's chop." "A firnest in a blacksmith." "The village smithy's anvil." "The dust that rises from the floor of a blacksmith's." A teacher, giving a reading-lesson to his class in the presence of an Inspector, asked the boys what was meant by conscience—a word that had occurred in the course of the reading. The class having been duly crammed for the question, answered as one boy: "An inward monitor." "But what do you understand by an inward monitor?" put in the Inspector. To this further question only one boy announced himself ready to respond, and his triumphantly-given answer was, "A hironclad, sir."

A few years back there was published, as a curiosity in its way, the subjoined transcript from Cowper's poem on Alexander Selkirk, written (from dictation) by a fifth-standard boy at a Government examination of a public elementary school. "I Ham Monac of hall I searve, there is none heare my rite to Dispute from the senter. Hall round to the sea I am lorde of the fowls to the Brute all shoshitude ware are the charms that sages have sene in thy face better Dewel in miste of a larms than in this moste horibel place. I am how of umity reach i must finish my Jurny a lone never hear the swete music of speach i start at the sound of my hone

the Beasts that rome over the place my forme with indrifice see they are so unocent with men such tamess is shocking to me."

The Examiner for the School Board Scholarships competed for in 1882, gives the following among other equally strange answers on historical matters. "When Commonwealth comes to the throne it is called Oliver Cromwell." "The treaty of Utrecht was fought between the Zulus and the English." "Lord Clive captured the Fiji Islands in 1624." "Cardinal Wolsey was a great warrior." "Walpole translated the Bible." "Walpole was another favourite of Henry the Eighth. He was the chief man in helping Henry to get a divorce." "Chaucer wrote *Æsop's fables*." In another of these scholarship examinations, Jack Cade was described as "a great Indian conqueror," Sir Christopher Wren was set down as "a discoverer" and "an animal painter," and Mr. Gladstone as "a great African traveller." The battle of Crecy was stated to have been fought in the reign of George the Third, between the Britons and Romans, and "The Wide, Wide World" was named as Shakespeare's greatest work. This last, however, was not so bad as the history of a pupil-teacher, who informed the examiner that "Shakespeare lived in the reign of George the Third, discovered America, and was killed by Caliban."

A schoolboy habit of placing upon a question some literal meaning other than that intended by the examiner, often leads to answers as curious as unexpected. Thus an Inspector, testing a class upon their knowledge of the succession of the kings of Israel, asked the boy to whose turn it had come to be questioned: "And who came after Solomon?" To which the youngest answered: "The Queen of Sheba, sir." Asked what were the chief ends of man, another boy replied, "His head and feet;" and a third, questioned as to where Jacob was going when he was ten years old, replied that he was "going on for eleven." One specially unimaginative juvenile, called upon to say for what the Red Sea was famous, answered, "Red herrings!" but, perhaps, the most startling answer of this kind was that of the boy, who, when asked what was meant by an unclean spirit, responded: "A dirty devil, sir."

To the type of answers here in view, belongs that of the little girl, daughter of a watchmaker, who having repeated

that she "renounced the devil and all his works," and being asked, "What do you understand by all his works?" answered: "His inside." Something akin to this was an answer given by a boy whose father was a strong teetotaler, and upon whom it would appear home influence had made a stronger impression than school lessons. "Do you know the meaning of syntax?" he was asked. "Yes," he answered; "sin-tax is the dooty upon spirits." An Inspector, who had been explaining to a class that the land of the world was not continuous, said to the boy who happened to be standing nearest to him: "Now, could your father walk round the world?" "No, sir," was promptly answered. "Why not?" "Because he's dead," was the altogether unlooked-for response. As little anticipated, probably, was the answer made to another Inspector, who asked, "What is a hovel?" and was met with the reply: "What you live in."

Another peculiarity of the schoolboy-mind is to put things negatively. As for example, a fifth-standard boy was asked to write a short essay on pins by way of an exercise in composition, and produced the following: "Pins are very useful. They have saved the lives of a great many men, women, and children—in fact, whole families." "How so?" asked the puzzled Inspector, on reading this. "Why, by not swallowing them," was the immediate reply. On the same lines was the essay of another schoolboy, on the subject of salt, which he described as: "The stuff that make potatoes taste bad, when you don't put any on." A prettily humorous examination story is that of the little Scotch boy at the Presbytery examination. He was asked: "What is the meaning of regeneration?" "To be born again," he answered. "Quite right! Would you not like to be born again?" He hesitated, but being pressed, said that he would not, and asked why not, replied: "For fear I might be born a lassie." Alike astonishing and amusing was an answer given by an adult-examinee, who was "sitting" for a certificate as acting-teacher. In the examination to test general knowledge, he was asked, "What is the Age of Reason?" and answered: "As many years as have elapsed since the birth of the person so named." It was also a certificate candidate who, in reading, rendered two lines from Goldsmith's *Edwin and Angelina*, thus:

The wicket opening with a latch
Received the armless pair.

GERALD.

BY ELEANOR C. PRICE.

CHAPTER XXXIX. BOB.

GERALD and Theo agreed that their friend Bob Stirling's proceedings were more colonial than anything they had seen since they left the colonies. If it had been any one but Bob, Gerald would certainly have been angry with him. To come into one's house the wrong way, storm one's garden, steal one's roses, almost make love to one's sister in the first half-hour of their acquaintance—these free and easy ways would have been rather hard to bear, if Bob had not been himself; but he was one of those happy fellows who may steal what they choose, while other men may not look over the hedge.

Bob's frank devotion to Ada was apparent from the very first moment; he had instantly lost his heart to the little rose-maiden, with her gold-brown hair and laughing eyes. As for Ada, all the little plaintive sadness had vanished from her manner since Bob arrived. Suddenly, unexpectedly, appearing out of space on the green hill above the garden, without any mention of trains, or sound of wheels, or sight of luggage, Ada's fairy prince had come as such a person ought. He and Ada were both quite capable of feeling the romance of it all; it was a small extra satisfaction that their first meeting might have happened in a story-book.

Theo and Gerald had welcomed Bob with the warmest friendliness. That evening they talked for a long time about Africa, and it seemed to Ada, who sat listening, that Theo liked talking about it; she asked with interest for so many people, and looked with a sort of eagerness at a *Diamond Fields*' newspaper which Bob gave her. Ada came and looked over her shoulder, but could see nothing but strings of odd advertisements, a great deal about the sale of "claims," which she did not understand, and accounts of various fights and rows, and consequent law-cases.

"What a horrid place it must have been," she said in a low voice.

"Yes, a horrid place," said Mr. Stirling. "I never wish to see it again. And yet—do you feel that, Gerald?"

"No, I hate it," Gerald said.

"I know what you mean," said Theo, lifting her eyes from the paper, and looking at Bob. "And yet—Africa is splendid. The life has gone out of life since we came home to England."

Gerald looked at her a little gloomily.

"Oh, Theo!" Ada whispered in her ear.

"I didn't mean to go nearly so far as that, you know," Bob said, in a sort of apology. "No, I always liked England best, and this time I like it better than ever, and I don't mean to go away again. But there is something—there's the endless feeling, and the colour—Mrs. Fane, of course, feels all that more intensely than we do."

"Yes; and it was all very well at first," said Gerald. "You wouldn't like to go back again, Theo?"

"Yes, I should," said Theo dreamily.

There was a little pause. Her words seemed strange to them all; none of them quite understood her; to Gerald and Ada she gave a slight chilling pain, and Bob was surprised; but no one could ask her why, or what she meant. In the silence Bob looked at Ada, and she met his eyes for a moment, and then looked rather shyly away. Then Bob began to talk again, and the shadow passed.

That night, as the two old friends were smoking together, Bob told Gerald all about his affairs: how he had wound up everything at Kimberley, selling his interest in the claim to Slater and Cumming, who were not yet satisfied with their gains, and were working on there still.

"I've got about two thousand a year," said Bob. "And to tell you the truth, I feel thoroughly unsettled. For the last two or three weeks, you know, I have been at home, going with my mother and the girls to tennis-parties. I met a great many people I used to know, but nobody knew me again, and when they found me out, they gave me to understand that I was awfully gone off. And the girls are always being surprised at everything I say and do; they are very well set up themselves, with a nice little lot of ideas and opinions on every subject. They play tennis rather well, and read novels, except Mary, who goes in for science, and free thought, and the church of the future, and a few more subjects which make a young woman horrid to talk to. I do hate educated women. But I am almost more afraid of the very orthodox fashionable sort, who know nothing, and are contemptuous."

"Don't be rude to your sisters; they used to be very pretty, at any rate," said Gerald.

"They will never marry," said Bob with decision. "I see it; they're getting stereo-

typed. But I have not told you the worst thing of all. My mother wants me to marry one of their greatest friends. She is rather good-looking, and rather clever, and she knows exactly what is right on all subjects. She has no money, and no relations to matter much. What were you going to say?" asked Bob a little nervously.

"I didn't know you had any idea of marrying. Well, you are wise to have waited till now."

"I hadn't much idea of it. I came away here to escape—because, you know, it becomes rather dangerous, when your mother and five sisters have made up their minds about a thing."

"Poor chap! I should think so," said Gerald kindly.

"Till to-day," said Bob, stroking his beard, and looking thoughtful, "I had never seen anybody I admired as much as Mrs. Fane."

"Thank you," said Gerald.

"But, of course—well, I don't know whether you will be surprised—I have at last seen the girl I want to marry. She—I say, your sister is more perfectly lovely—"

Bob broke down and laughed; then he went on more reasonably:

"I hope you will tell me if there is anything that makes it useless to think of it. If so, I'll go away to-morrow."

Gerald did not at once reply. Bob looked at him nervously; it now occurred to him for the first time that there might be some obstacle; of course, after all, was it quite likely that Ada Fane in her loveliness would have waited for him! For a minute Gerald sat looking on the floor; then he remembered his friend's anxiety, and said with rather a puzzled smile:

"I'm very much obliged to you, Bob."

"Well, then, it's all right, isn't it?" said Bob eagerly.

"There is nothing that would make me more glad for Ada," said Gerald; "but—"

He stopped, evidently embarrassed.

"You think she won't?" said Bob.

"You think there is somebody else in the way?"

"No, I don't."

"Then what do you mean?"

They were sitting in the study, the small old room, with its long window and low walls. Ada's picture did not hang there now, for Theo had put it in her own room; but as Gerald listened to his friend's

talk, certain scenes in his own life, in that room, one of them connected with Ada, came back to him very vividly. He could see Clarence walking up and down, could hear him saying that Ada should marry Warren when she was seventeen. And then the temptation of the next day, and Theo at the gate, his angel, turning him back. And then those other moments with Clarence, when his brother had so calmly told the story of his own disgrace, which, to Gerald's feeling then, banished him from England, and Theo, and all his hopes for ever. And even now, the shadow of that disgrace seemed often to fall upon him; in spite of all Theo's love, and trust, and pride, he felt himself still involved in Clarence's shame. Ada knew nothing of it; he hoped she never would; but he could not let his friend marry Ada in ignorance of it. Bob saw that there was some struggle going on in Gerald's mind. He was very fond of Gerald, whose morbid fits grieved him, without making him at all angry, for he was a patient, good-tempered man.

"There is something wrong, old fellow; what is it?" he said, after waiting for a few minutes silently.

"I am glad you spoke to me first," said Gerald, "because I must have told you this, anyhow, and it may make a great difference. You may wish to withdraw what you have said, and I shall not have any right to be surprised."

"You would be surprised, however, wouldn't you?" said Bob. "I can't imagine anything—"

"Stop. Don't commit yourself any further," said Gerald, smiling a little. "I have got a horrid story to tell you."

Bob stared at him in astonishment.

"Is it necessary that I should be harrowed like this?" he enquired.

"Yes; if you mean what you have said about my sister, it is necessary," said Gerald; and sitting in the same attitude, with his eyes bent on the floor, he told Bob what Clarence had done.

"And so, after I heard it," he ended his story, "I gave her up and went out to Africa; but she wouldn't—unhappily for her—and I asked her to come, and she came, and the rest of it you know."

"I know that you are a lucky fellow," said Bob, "for you have two of the most charming women in England for your wife and your sister, and in their different ways the most beautiful too. But you are discontented still—and you have a friend,

but you won't trust him; you rake up a painful old story to tell him, and think that he will shake off the dust from his feet and disappear, because you have a half-brother in South America who has not always been as good as the rest of his family. Look here, Gerald, you will have to give your sister to me, because I shall take better care of her than you will."

"Thank you, Bob," said Gerald quietly.

Theo had a great deal to do the next day in comforting Ada, who came to her whenever she could escape from Bob, to ask whether she was perfectly shocked; whether they had behaved too badly ever to be forgiven; if such extraordinary haste had ever been heard of before? To meet a man for the first time one evening at sunset, to be followed down into the garden early the next morning, before breakfast, when she had stolen away quite quietly to think things over and gather a rose, to return from the garden in half an hour's time, having promised to marry that man! Was it wonderful that Ada quite declined to face her brother and sister, and, instead of coming in to breakfast, fled back to her own room. Theo went to her there, Mr. Stirling having confessed his crime, and found the child crying; but she was soon comforted, and whispered to Theo that it was dreadful to be so happy.

That evening Theo was very tired. Gerald pulled her sofa forward to the drawing-room window, close to all the flowers in the balcony, and the stars began to shine in the quiet evening sky. Somewhere away in the garden the two happy lovers were wandering; and these two old married people had been talking about them, as they sat together in the window.

"Bob is so boyish; they are like happy children," said Theo.

"Things are very differently arranged for different people," Gerald said, looking at her. "Isn't it unfair! Here's Bob—no anxieties, no doubts, no fears, no suspense—when I look at him, and think what I had to go through, Theo, I pity myself—don't you?"

"Foolish boy!" said Theo. "You and I could not have been like that. We had to have patience, and to find each other out."

"I didn't want to find you out. I knew all about you on Helen's wedding-day."

"Did you?" said Theo. "But, Gerald, this engagement would be a frightful risk for almost anybody. It is only because these two are so transparent and childish

and nice, without any dark depths, my dear, like you and me. Of course one sees they will be perfectly happy together."

"There's something that comes over me sometimes," said Gerald, after a long pause. "I feel as if I had spoilt your life, Theo. Since you married me you have had nothing but trouble and sorrow. When I look at them it makes me think of it—because I know Bob will never have to say that to Ada."

Theo did not contradict him. He was sitting beside her on the low window-seat, holding her hand, and she was looking out past the flowers, into the soft depths of sky.

"I know you feel that," she said presently, drawing him nearer; "but, my darling, you ought to trust me more. We should never have belonged to each other so perfectly as we do, without our sorrow. I have looked at them to-day, and thought I would rather have my sorrow than all their happiness, present and future too. Do you believe me, Gerald?"

CHAPTER XL AND LAST. THE OLD FAIRY.

"YES, very true; it was all my doing, all my fault; I quite acknowledge that," said Lady Redcliff.

Hugh North did not exactly know what he had said to bring out this acknowledgment; Lady Redcliff was, perhaps, answering her own thoughts, rather than his. Of course they had been talking of Theo, their one subject in common.

"But I never pretended, you know, to be a good grandmother," Lady Redcliff went on, almost angrily. "I never understood young people—I hate them, especially girls. Theo, of course, was an exception, but then she was different from ordinary girls."

"I should think so," said Hugh in a low voice. "I always thought there was something so—so perfectly fine about her."

"Ah!" Lady Redcliff gave a sort of sigh. "I know what you mean. And poor Gerald—I thought he had it too, when I saw him first; I fell very much in love with him. But there always was a strain of weakness in the Fanes. Well, I suppose they are as happy as other people, so far. Theo will get tired of him by-and-by, but I dare say she will be too generous to let him see it."

Hugh was silent; it did not give him any particular satisfaction to think that Theo would presently be tired of her

husband. However, he did not believe it was likely.

"If the child had lived, it might have been a different thing," said Lady Redcliff. "Then Theo would have had something to look forward to. The death of that child broke her heart; she told me as much, after she came home, and I saw it in her face. But now—Gerald will get lazy and selfish, and lose his good looks, and she, of course, lost hers in that abominable climate—and, in fact, poor things, I see nothing but deadly dullness before them. Well, I did my best to prevent it, with just the contrary effect. It was my interference that sent Theo out to Africa."

"It is very difficult to guess the result of what one does," said Hugh thoughtfully. "I left them very cheerful yesterday," he went on, looking up. "All the preparations for Miss Fane's wedding seemed to amuse Theo, rather."

"A pack of fools!" said Lady Redcliff. "Did you see the digger? What is he like? Does he go about in his shirt-sleeves, and wear a hat in the house?"

"No, he is quite civilised; a nice sort of fellow, rather talkative," said Hugh. "I knew him out there, you know. He is a very good specimen of a digger."

"That is not saying much, I suspect. You are very good-natured and charitable, Captain North. Were you always like that, or has your temper improved lately?"

"I believe it has," said Hugh. "I have been cultivating indifference, as a good preparation for India."

"Why on earth are you going to India?" asked Lady Redcliff.

"The regiment is ordered there, and I don't want to leave the army."

Lady Redcliff remained silent for a minute or two, watching him with her sharp black eyes. Hugh had altered very much in the last two years; he had no longer the air of calm self-satisfaction which used to enrage her. He looked like a man who had gone through a storm of trouble; his face was thin, his eyes were hollow and grave, and he stooped a little as he sat.

"Will India agree with you?" said Lady Redcliff suddenly.

"No, I believe not; the doctors say it won't," he answered, smiling.

"Then how foolish to go!"

"I don't care much, you see. My life is of no value to anybody."

This was a very desperate speech for Hugh, and he, perhaps, felt a little

ashamed of it, for he got up and came towards Lady Redcliff, holding out his hand.

She took no notice of this, however.

"You have made your will, I suppose, and left everything to Theo," she said.

Hugh lifted his eyebrows, and smiled.

"Has my lawyer been confiding in you, Lady Redcliff?" he said. "Yes; I did that before I went out to Africa."

"Poor man—good man!" said Lady Redcliff, looking at him with a smile, and almost a sort of dimness over her eyes. "I am sorry I used to hate you—but to a wicked old woman like me, you are rather hard to understand. Why didn't you ask Theo to marry you years ago—ages ago, before Gerald Fane was seen or dreamt of?"

"Because I did not know, then, how much I loved her," said Hugh very quietly. "But it would have been no use, even then. She would never have cared for me."

"She might have married you, though, before she knew what it was to be in love," said Lady Redcliff with a small laugh. "I should have raged, but that would have been very much in your favour, as she always opposed me."

Hugh stood looking out of the window for a moment.

"I think it is best as it is," he said. "I think that would have been worse than this, do you know?"

"Oh, really, do you!" said Lady Redcliff with a sneer.

Her good moments were only moments, and she had not had many of them in her life. Suddenly her pity and liking for Hugh seemed to have passed away; he was, as she said, beyond her understanding. She wished him good-bye coldly enough, and let him go, and walked up and down her room for an hour afterwards, like a little caged tiger.

A few days after Hugh had sailed, Bob Stirling and Ada Fane were married in the little church at Deerhurst, which was all decorated with roses for the occasion. It was very different from Linwood Church, with its great chancel and stately windows, where Helen Fraser was married to John Goodall, and where Gerald Fane and Theo Meynell had first seen each other. It was an odd contrast, too, to St. George's Cathedral at Cape Town. Theo stood dreaming, as she looked at Ada, perhaps the loveliest and happiest bride of all. She thought of these things, and then she thought of the

lonely place where she had left her baby, with those great plains outstretching to the mountains, and the low marble cross with his name, the one memorial at Kimberley of their sad months there.

And then Theo lifted her eyes, and woke from her dream once more to find Gerald looking at her, and smiled in answer to the look he gave her, remembering that after all she was happy.

THE BLACK ART.

THE recent hunger for instantaneous photographs has almost succumbed to the undermining influences of an irresistible coalition of public indifference and self-exhaustion. The Derby, the Boat Race, and the Great Western Express have still their (photographic) admirers, who perpetuate the handiwork of their ambition, year after year, in the windows of hole-and-corner printsellers' shops, etc.; but, as obtaining amongst the crowd whose special art-leanings culminate in the products of the camera, the desire for speed is sensibly diminishing in favour of quality.

Muybridge, the Californian enthusiast, with his marvellous but fantastic illustrations of what the camera, in the smallest attainable atom of time, reveals the motions of men and other animals to be, succeeded in casting completely into the shade the achievements of those whose vocabularies have long been prodigal of "fifths" and "tenths" of seconds, and even lesser—or greater—fractional innovations. Few people, beyond the meagre circle of experts, could—or, indeed, can—tell an instantaneous picture from one that has received half a minute's exposure. Want of thought, and ignorance of primary essentials and conditions, cloak their perception, and, as a result, they are a long time discovering any difference between a haystack and a steamboat, as subjects for the camera. Then, again, it takes somebody of practical acumen to appreciate instantaneity. The cardinal fault of all quick pictures is lack of life. An instantaneous photograph of a busy group of people is suggestive of nothing so much as the representation of some bit of a "dead city." The late demonstration in Hyde Park furnishes a cogent case in point. The crowd was operated upon by a friend of ours, who fell into rhapsodies over the amount of vigour, detail, and sharpness of the resulting negatives. The

prints were the gloomiest of studies—full, it is true, of people, but all looking as immovable and stony, as dull and apathetic, as the Alexandrian obelisk. The public can never accurately grasp the precise point of instantaneous photographs. With it, newspaper illustrations are infinitely more popular. They are, it may be, deficient in that faultless detail and irreproachable fidelity which the camera alone can give, but they possess what the latter never yet has succeeded in catching—viz., animation, and the “*naturalesque*.”

What is an instantaneous photograph? is a question that has been propounded more than once. It is commonly supposed that so long as the picture of a moving body does not show signs of that movement, an instantaneous photograph has been secured. The essence, but not the totality of the proposition, will pass muster; for Muybridge claimed to have obtained his galloping horses in one five-thousandth part of a second; and a yacht in full sail was recently exhibited that had received an exposure of one second, whilst a misty crowd of race-horses, an indefinable flock of rooks, and a stretch of mournful surge were also shown, the exposures of which ranged from one-fiftieth to one five-hundredth of a unit of time. It will be seen, then, that the term instantaneous is a very elastic one.

Broadly, photography is little more than forty years old; and it is only within the past decade or so that it has attained to even the apparition of artistic excellence. But the old photographic order has indeed changed, and given place to a more exalted new one. It was not until very recent days that a passable pose and judicious lighting could be obtained; as to the accuracy of this charge, the best evidence we can produce, viz., old portraits of the Royal Family, gives eloquent testimony. After the Franco-German War, however, the invasion of a crowd of continental artists altered all this, and in consequence we have, up and down the country, innumerable studios where one can rely on a picture that shall possess, at least, visible indications of taste and discrimination on the part of its executors. Most of the operators in the principal London studios are either French or Italian, commanding handsome salaries. One of the largest and best known firms pays an “artist” seven hundred pounds a year for simply posing sitters, and flanks it with an annual continental vacation of some weeks,

in order that he may study new poses and ideas.

With the advent of the dry plate, some seven or eight years ago, the palmy days of professional photography may be considered to have received a permanent shock; coincidently, an impetus was given to the amateur contingent, the momentum of which is still apparent. The operations of the dark room—formerly a highly unclean and disagreeable martyrdom—are now rendered ridiculously easy and not unpleasant. The silver and collodion baths received their dismissal from the majority of studios, although they are not, we fear, wholly extinct yet, being doubtless tenderly cherished by a few black-stocked old fogies. As implied in the now universal appellation, the sensitive plates are quite “dry,” looking when seen in the daylight, like glass coated with a creamy substance. When exposed it is not necessary that they should be developed at once, experience proving that the exposed plate, if kept perfectly safe against light, etc., may be developed two, three, or even four years afterwards with absolutely no loss of image. As a result of this extreme simplification of the process, far less money is made by professional photographers than formerly. Some twenty years since, a certain firm located in Baker Street, in the enjoyment of august patronage, counted their sitters by hundreds daily, at fees which would be considered magnificent even to-day. The two partners amassed an immense fortune in an incredibly short time. The business was subsequently removed to a suburb, where the surviving partner recently died worth—nothing. He had set his face against the new-fangled dry plates, and paid the penalty of prejudice.

Amateur photographers may be met with in every grade of society, for, given an eye for the beautiful, as distinguished from the absolutely prosy, the remaining operations necessary to the production of a picture are simply mechanical—requiring, of course, as all mechanical operations do, some little care and forethought in their application. The cost of a complete set of apparatus ranges from two to twenty pounds; all superfluous weight is carefully avoided, and this, with the additional advantage accruing to the dry plate in that immediate development after exposure is not needful, has helped to raise up a whole army of amateur photographers. The butterman knows as much about focussing as the baronet,

and a retired marine store dealer discusses "wide-angle lenses" and "over-exposures" with the same confidence and authority as a marquis. It is imagined that the professional is profoundly jealous of the amateur. No such thing. Again, he does not even attribute the increasing depression of his receipts to the indirect influence of the amateur. He neither fears nor anathematises him. He is his very good friend, for the amateur as a rule has neither prowess nor patience, and the exceptions (lamentably few) soon lose what little power they acquire in a melancholy maze of scientific chemistry and abstruse optics. So the professional, in return for the amateur's condescension in fraternising with him at society discussions, encourages him to the utmost, doling him out little crumbs of information, and emphatically (but suavely) inviting him to write to the papers, which the amateur does, as the subscribers to the professional journals can testify. In a little time he draws blood with a rival artist; they quarrel, haggle, or dispute over a straw, experiment, make discoveries, and communicate them to the world. And, if these discoveries are practicable, or worth anything at all, the professional calmly adopts them with a smile of complacence, and devoutly wishes that all his amateur friends would follow his disinterested advice.

His Royal Highness of Edinburgh studied photography some years since, and the deceased Duke of Wellington was a thorough proficient. Military men and clergymen give the greatest proportion of votaries to the art-science, as some busy-body with a mania for the coining of terms expresses it—the former profession deriving wide benefits from photographs, whilst the latter's efforts are obviously useful at bazaars and so on. The wife of one of our youngest bishops turns out presentable prints. The extent, indeed, to which photography is indulged in as a pastime by the members of the liberal professions is quite beyond the conception of the outside world. The bench, the bar, both Houses of the Legislature, literature, and the drama, all have their photographic amateurs—more or less capable workers. The latter, as will have been already inferred, outweigh the former in a proportion too great for the barbarity of comparison, the truth being that not one in a hundred has the requisite stock of patience (a large one) before anything creditable can be arrived at. Of the two, a retired buttermilk and

a Queen's counsel, the first-named would succeed as an amateur photographer before the second, because he can afford more time for it; and time, after all, is the most important factor in many things.

"EDELWEISS."

A STORY.

INTRODUCTION. "THE DREAM."

THE great mountains reared themselves in an imposing mass nearly six thousand feet above the blue waters of the Vierwaldstätter Sea. Snow still crowned their mighty brows, though base and sides were clothed in leafage, and beautiful with curtaining boughs, and fronds of young green ferns, and new up-springing grasses. The last warm sunrays lingered on the heights, and lit up the blueness of the sky and the crests of the different altitudes. But in the valley below the soft dusk crept along with noiseless steps, folding the pretty villages in tender arms, and hushing every sound with the spell of its own restfulness.

A man was resting half-way down the mountain side, watching, with dreamy eyes, the changing colours of the sky, and the magic of the gathering twilight.

He was a poet, and poets have strange fancies; and he had had many in his time, and had written beautiful things, and the world called him great. He had been to the topmost point of the Rigi that day, and was fatigued, and weary, and so he sat there now to rest himself, and his hand played idly with a little sprig of edelweiss he had gathered in a cleft of the mountain.

Below him was a deep gorge, its steep sides clothed with firs—a rocky, dangerous precipice spanned by a frail, little bridge. Beside this bridge had been erected a little wooden cross, and on that cross was carved a name—the name of the flower he held in his hand—"Edelweiss."

He wondered what was the story of that little cross? He was given to making stories for himself out of all sorts of odd materials, but sometimes he liked to hear a real one, and he thought there must be a real one appended to this.

"Edelweiss!" Just the name of the little Alpine flower he held in his hand. The little, hardy, simple thing that grows among the snow-heights, with nothing green or fragrant to share its solitude, unlike its sister flowers of wood and field.

"Edelweiss!" Was it the name of anyone? Had it any meaning—any history—any legend of these great cold

peaks which towered above him now with the golden sunrays for their crown?

The twilight crept on apace, the valleys and the waters turned from dusk to dark. A faint grey mist crept up the leafy path, and clung about the pine boughs and the deep gorge into which he gazed. He watched its strange, soft, intangible beauty clinging in ghostly fashion to the outstretched arms of the trees, shrouding the precipitous descent; and as he watched he saw it part, and gliding through its filmy curtains came a slender figure—the figure of a girl with rippling golden hair that clothed her like light, and on her brow the star-like flower of the edelweiss.

She came up that steep and stony precipice with feet that scarcely seemed to touch the ground. Nearer and nearer he saw her advancing, and his curiosity deepened into wonder, and his wonder into awe, for it seemed to him that never mortal foot could tread that frightful path, or mortal form be borne along its perilous ascent with such winged speed as this.

By the little wooden cross where he was seated the figure paused. A white moon had shown itself in the sky above, and its clear light fell upon the slender girl's form, and the wealth of hair, and the deep and mournful eyes. Surprised, yet not alarmed, the poet raised himself upon his elbow, and spoke.

"Who are you?" he asked. His voice sounded muffled and far away—he felt like one in a dream.

Then it seemed as if the moonlight grew dazzling, and a flood of liquid silver poured itself over the white and cloud-like draperies, and the mantle of shining hair.

She stood by the cross, and her hand rested on it.

Her lips parted, a glow of life and colour seemed to quiver through face and form like a flame that shines behind alabaster.

"I am Edelweiss," she said sadly. "Here I had no other name. I used to think the mountains gave me birth, even as I know they gave me death."

Her eyes drooped, her curved mouth grew sorrowful. But sweeter than any music was the voice that once more raised its plaintive tones:

"I was young to die—oh yes!—but not too young to love. I can remember it all so well, and how for his life I gave my own. I think, sometimes, that will keep me in his memory, and then—some day—when we meet again, he will know me and thank

me for some years of happiness given to him at the cost of mine. He put this cross here—here where I found my death. Sometimes he will come and look at it, and remember. That is enough for me. I am only 'Edelweiss.'"

The moon was covered by a heavy cloud. The grey mists grew more dense and chill. There was a faint sigh among the pine-boughs, and the radiant figure seemed to grow indistinct.

"Stay!" called the listener. "Tell me your story, if you can. I will weave it into words and it shall live, and the world shall hear of it, and of you who were brave enough to give life for love—child as you seem."

The faint voice stole back through the misty shadows, fainter, sweeter than before.

"Love alone outlasts life; it is stronger than death, or hate, or all things that men cherish, and deify, and adore. I have no story but that. I loved, and for love's sake I perished. This cross bears my name. He who placed it here—remembers. For me, that is enough."

THE AWAKING.

THE moon looked down upon the white snows of the mountain-crests. The mists had faded like a dream. A fresh wind moved among the pine-boughs, and blew the lake-waters into lines of rippling silver.

Below all was darkness and silence in the sleeping villages of Wäggis and of Vitznau, and the night air had grown chill with falling dews.

The poet roused himself and stood upright, his eyes turned wonderingly to the bridge, the ravine, and the cross.

But there was no cross there, and in his hand lay only a spray of edelweiss.

Yet it seemed to him that something more than a dream must have peopled those misty shadows, and made them thrill and quiver as with a living presence. The presence of a love faithful unto death, and, like death, silent.

He took his way down the steep, rough path, with only the moonrays to light it. His brain felt dizzy and strange. A crowd of thoughts, sorrowful, perplexed, bewildering, kept time to his restless feet, and set themselves to the rhythm of a hundred fancies.

When a man has the eye of a painter, and the soul of a poet, and loves the wild solitudes of mountain and forest, and the

music of wind and waters, and the change-ful beauty of the wide heaven, and all and everything that makes earth a wonder, and life a joy, it is no marvel if from these sights and sounds he draws the hidden music of sweet dreams, and weaves them into histories that seem to him real.

So the poet placed the edelweiss in his breast and took his way down the tourist-haunted mountain, to the little, grey, sheltered village set amidst its flowering chestnuts by the blue lake-waters.

And resting there, through the bright spring weather, and idling the hours away between the mountains and the valleys, he gave the rein to his fancy, and wove into words the following romance.

Whether it holds in it some grain of truth, matters very little now, only be assured that if you go up the Rigi by foot, and stand beside the craggy wilderness of the Schnürstobel Bridge, you will see the little wooden cross and its simple carved device, and learn its history for yourself just as accurately as the poet learnt it. But be equally assured that if you make your pilgrimage thither in a matter-of-fact, or cynical, or simply curious spirit, you will no more see the cross or gather the edelweiss than did the poet when he awoke from his dream.

CHAPTER I. THE SNOWFLOWER.

THAT was the name old Hans Krauss had given her. His Snowflower—his little white foundling, discovered by him one sunny April morning, half hidden in a nook in the mountains.

How she had come there was a mystery. It was too early in the year for tourists, and the mountains around and about Vitznau still wore their snow-coverings, though in the villages below, and on the sloping sides of those great heights, the trees were budding into leafage as the sun daily acquired more power.

On that eventful April morning, now fifteen years back, old Krauss had left his little cabin, and begun the steep ascent that leads to the Rigi-Kulm.

It was very early; grey mists still floated overhead. The birds were scarcely awake among the fluttering leaves; the bleat of a kid in the distance had an odd, little, muffled sound, and the tiny water-runnels were chasing each other down the steep ways as if in a mighty hurry to make up for the time they had lost while the Frost King had locked them into their frozen winter sleep. Over the peaks of the

Rigi, and the Jungfrau, and the Wetterhorn, the day was breaking in all its golden glory of sunrise, and old Krauss had halted for a moment as he climbed the steep ascent, and looked at the familiar scene with his glad and honest eyes, as if its beauty were still new and still wonderful.

He had lived among these scenes ever since he could remember—a child, a youth, a man—and he loved them with that steadfast, dogged love that is born of the soil and the constant association with one spot, round which cluster all the memories of life. His life had been a hard one, and often enough rough, toilsome, full of fatigues, and struggles, and difficulties, but not an unhappy life for all that. His nature was too simple, his heart too tender and honest, his temper too cheerful and gay, for any demon of discontent to find entrance.

That April day, fifteen years back, had been a sorrowful one, it is true, for he had only come up the evening before to the little cabin on the high, steep mountain sides, and for the first time for many years he had come alone. His wife had died, and he had buried her in the little churchyard at Vitznau, and, lonely and childless, he had come to his summer nook and his summer work with a great sorrow to weight his heart, and a great shadow to darken his life.

It was too early for tourists, unless chance led some restless or adventurous spirit thither, as sometimes happened, but Hans Krauss had thought he would make his way to those familiar spots on the heights where he had been used to look for edelweiss. In heart Krauss was a pure mountaineer. He loved to see the grey mists of daybreak roll away before the touch of the first sunrays; he loved to feel the breath of the cool, rich air as he climbed upwards and upwards to the summits of the great peaks; he loved, above all, that intense and breathless solitude that thrones Nature in a majesty of its own that no presence can overthrow, and no civilisation dares to desecrate.

He had the mountains all to himself. His compatriots had not troubled to come here yet, and he plodded on—on through the beautiful rosy daybreak, and amidst the breath and sounds of spring, feeling his heart grow lighter at every step, though he could have given no reason for the feeling.

Perhaps if he could, the sensation would

have lost its grace and beauty. Self-analysis is the outcome of an over-refined and morbid civilisation. It dissects every feeling and emotion with merciless precision; it peers and pries into the delicate mechanism of the mind; it puts the heavy brake of persistent explanation on the more subtle flights of intelligence, and, cumbered and weighted and oppressed in this fashion, the spirit vainly tries to soar into the purer ether of fancy and feeling.

Hans Krauss was only a simple peasant with few needs and fewer ambitions. Sunlight, beauty, the sense of strength and freedom—these were in themselves blessings he could appreciate and value; he did not trouble to explain why.

It was chill up on those mountain heights in the early morning, even though the sun was momentarily gathering power and the snows were melting fast. Here and there were little nooks softly carpeted with mossy grass, or bright with peeping flower-bells, but he saw no edelweiss; and he went on farther and higher, until quite suddenly he stopped and stared like one in amaze, for there, in a nook where the snows had melted, and wrapped warmly and closely in a rough goatskin cloak such as shepherds wear, lay a little child some few months old. It was sound asleep. The little downy head, and rose-like cheeks, and dimpled hands were peeping out of its rough coverlet, and Hans Krauss stood and stared as if he could not at all reconcile the fact of its presence to his startled senses.

Having at last satisfied himself that it was a living creature, he bent down and tenderly raised the little bundle. The child slept placidly on. He forgot all about the edelweiss and his intention of spending the day on the mountains. He made his way back to his little cabin, and the child never woke till he reached it. When she looked up at last and the blue eyes smiled at him, a strange emotion rushed through his honest breast. He had so mourned his loneliness, and surely the saints must have sent this companion as a consolation! Otherwise, how could she have come to that mountain nook and lain there safe and unharmed? He kept the child there, and in company with the kid she shared the milk of his solitary goat, and thrived and grew and became the joy and delight of his eyes. She was always with him, and her helplessness and beauty and sweetness made her dearer day by day.

The spring advanced, and the summer brought autumn tourists and travellers to the mountains, and the little steamers from Luzern plied merrily over the blue lake-waters, and it seemed to Hans Krauss as if never had he been so fortunate or strangers so generous, and he attributed such unusual luck to the presence of his little foundling.

His neighbours and friends laughed at him and wondered at him, and speculation was rife as to the child's parentage and inexplicable appearance among them; but Hans troubled himself no whit about what they said. The angels must have sent her—that was his opinion, and to that he kept.

He named her Edelweiss, and when the old priest at Vitznau rebuked it as heathenish, and gave her baptism and a saint's name sacred to the day of her discovery, he accepted it all without a murmur, but never changed his own appellation.

So time passed on, and years brought changes in their train, and the child grew and flourished in that pure, beautiful air, and now was tall and slender as a young fir-tree, and had a face beautiful as the morning, and was the very core and centre of all delight to old Hans Krauss, whom she believed to be her father, and always called so.

The winter months were always spent at Vitznau. Hans Krauss used to do wood-carving or any odd jobs that were thrown in his way, and the child went to the village school, and learnt to read and sew, and spin and knit, and was altogether so quick, and so pretty, and so industrious, that again and again her foster-father thanked the saints for sending him such a treasure.

But Edelweiss loved best that time of the year when the snows melted and the noons grew warm and bright, and she and Hans Krauss took their way to the little cabin perched high up in a sheltered nook of the mountain, there to stay till the days grew chill and the autumn tourists had gone, and the scanty harvest that could be gleaned from them had been gathered in. Sometimes ladies would come and sit at the cabin to chat and rest themselves, or drink a glass of goat's milk, or bargain for a chair to carry them to the highest points, where they might watch the sunset; and they were always generous to the pretty child, and many a mark or thaler would be put into the little brown hand as payment for the

milk, or the wild flowers, or the edelweiss that she sold them.

But this was in her childish days, and before the advent of that triumph of engineering skill, the Rigi Railway, or the building of that monster hotel which brought hundreds where once scores had only come.

Both these innovations had been a source of great trouble to Hans Krauss. He saw in them only a prospect of ruin and an utter desecration of the beauty and solitude of the mountains. True, guides had never been needed very much, for the Rigi is not like its famous and difficult Alpine sisterhood. Still, he had always found opportunities for his services, and could point out the quickest and easiest modes of ascent, and the best views; and having, in a way, become known as useful, and honest, and intelligent, he had managed to make those summer and autumn months very profitable. Now all would be changed. At first he had thought people must be mad to talk of making a railway up a mountain, and believed it an impossibility; but, as time went on, he found it was steadily progressing, and all the beautiful solitude was disturbed by sounds of axe, and pick, and snorting engines, and hiss of steam, and rough voices of workmen, and the incessant din and traffic necessary for so great a work.

To Edelweiss it was a source of constant wonder and interest. She was a tall, slender girl now, of sixteen years, with the same frank, beautiful eyes, and golden hair, and tender, serious smile of her childhood—a girl as innocent and pure as the flower whose name she bore, and with a nature as simple and content as that of Hans Krauss himself.

One June evening, towards sunset, she was sitting by herself some distance off the line of operations, watching the men at work.

Before that autumn was over the line would be complete; the following year it would be opened.

As her grave eyes followed the movements of the men, she saw a figure approach which of late had attracted a good deal of her attention and interest. She had heard he was a young Austrian, an engineer, who was a friend of the superintendent of the men.

The superintendent had often spoken to her, and even explained many things about the new wonder, and the ingenious

method to be used for working it. She had rather a confused idea of leverage, and grooves, and cog-wheels, and machinery, and the working of brakes; but it seemed to her very wonderful—almost supernatural, in fact—and she tried often to explain it to Hans Krauss.

On this particular evening she was waiting for the old man, who had gone to the top of the Rigi to show a stranger the best point of view. She had a bunch of wild flowers in her hand; her head was uncovered, and caught all the last brightness of the sunrays among its gold; her earnest eyes were fixed in grave observance on the group of men who had left off work, and were talking to the young engineer.

Some difficulty seemed to have arisen respecting the nature of the ground. One of the men at last pointed to the girl.

"Ask her," he said in his rough German; "she knows every step of the way between Vitznau and the Kulm. The line must curve here; it's not possible to take it straight."

There was a little more talking, then Edelweiss saw the stranger approaching, and, colouring with some sudden access of bashfulness, she rose to her feet.

He looked at her with surprise. Her dress was only a peasant's dress; her head was bare, her hands brown from exposure, and rough with hard work; but yet there was an indescribable air of refinement and delicacy about her aspect and manner which seemed to speak of something not akin to a peasant's nature. He put his questions to her, and she answered them briefly and simply, even though her colour came and went, and her heart was beating nervously beneath its linen bodice at the deference in the young man's tone, the involuntary homage of his eyes. She did not know that he was artist enough to feel the picture she made, standing there in the glow of sunlight, with the poppies and grasses in her hands, and the wind softly stirring the loose gold hair above her brow. Having gained the information he wished, he went back and gave some orders to the men, then strolled off, and followed in the track she had taken among the pine-trees and firs.

He came up to her as she halted by a rough seat, put up by Krauss himself. She raised her hand to her eyes to shade them from the sun, and looked up the mountain as far as she could see. The old man was not yet in sight.

As her hand dropped she heard a footfall, and looked round. The young Austrian was just beside her.

"May I sit here a while and rest?" he asked softly; "and will you tell me where you live, and all about yourself? Surely I have seen you somewhere before. Your face is strangely familiar."

"I am always here," she said in her grave, simple way. "No doubt you have seen me often."

"And your name?" he questioned. "The men over there called you Edelweiss; is that really your name?"

"Yes," she answered, her colour deepening a little as she met his eyes. "My father, who found me there in the mountains, called me that. I say my father, for I have known no other. I think I could have loved no other—better."

"Found there in the mountains!" he echoed wonderingly. "Who could have left you to such a fate?"

"I cannot tell. I shall never know," she answered simply. "It was not kind, I think. I might have died so easily. Few people ever come to the Rigi in that season, and the snow was still on the ground and upon the higher clefts. My father found me in one."

"And that is all you know of yourself?" he asked in surprise.

"Yes. It is enough, is it not? I have lived here or at Vitznau all the time. The people love me and are kind to me, and I am happy."

"Happy!" he echoed somewhat vaguely. "Ah yes—no doubt. They know you; they would think no worse of you for your story; that is the best of being poor."

"Why should they think worse of me? I have done nothing wrong," she said, looking up at him with her frank blue eyes.

An odd little smile came to his lips.

"My child, if you were a little less innocent, you would know well enough that we have to carry other burdens besides our own, and suffer for other faults besides those we have committed. You are right. Why should they think worse of you? There is no reason whatever. And so you live here in these mountain solitudes all the year round, and are happy? Do you know I envy you that confession?"

"Is it so rare to be happy?" she asked, a little puzzled by his tone.

"Very," he answered. "In the world, at least."

"Ah," she said softly, "but then I don't know the world; it never troubles me. I have lived here always; I hope I shall live here always. Sometimes I think I should like to know a little more. They teach us so little at the school. But the priests say too much book-learning is not good; and, after all, what use would it be to me?"

He looked at her again with that close and earnest regard that puzzled and in a way troubled her.

"What use— Well, perhaps you are right. No one can be more than happy. You said you were that. But you are only a child yet. How old are you?"

"I am sixteen—so my father reckons."

"Sixteen, and you live in a cabin, and eat black bread, and work all the year round, and your life contents you?" murmured the young man musingly. "That seems odd?"

"Does it?" she said, and smiled frankly as she met his eyes—beautiful eyes they were. Dark, and earnest, and full of a strange soft light. She thought she had never seen any like them.

"Perhaps you are rich and great," she went on in that pretty patois that was neither Swiss nor German, but yet which he understood easily enough. "Then it must seem strange to you, of course."

He laughed a little harshly.

"I am not rich," he said, "or great. I wish I were."

She would have liked to have told him what in some way she dimly felt—that perhaps by very reason of that discontent, he had missed the road to happiness which she had found so easily.

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